

<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

---

## Spatial justice : how the police craft the city by enforcing law on prostitution

Kondakov, Alexander

Routledge  
2018

---

Kondakov , A 2018 , Spatial justice : how the police craft the city by enforcing law on prostitution . in M-L Skilbrei & M Spanger (eds) , Understanding sex for sale : Meanings and moralities of sexual commerce . 1st edn , Interdisciplinary Studies in Sex for Sale , Routledge , London , pp. 199-214 . <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315107172>

---

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/298493>  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315107172>

---

unspecified  
acceptedVersion

---

*Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.*

*This is an electronic reprint of the original article.*

*This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.*

*Please cite the original version.*

## Spatial justice

### How the police craft the city by enforcing law on prostitution

*Alexander Kondakov*

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the law on sex work in contemporary Russia and highlights the role of a particular actor in economic transactions of the sex for sale, the police. I will analyse the tension that informs the current definition of sex work as a vicious criminal act of ‘prostitution’ on the one hand, and as an everyday normalised economic activity on the other. This analysis is undertaken within socio-spatial thinking, or ‘the idea that there exists a mutually influential and formative relation between the social and the spatial dimensions of human life, each shaping the other in similar ways’ (Soja 2010: 3). I look at the city as having at least in part been produced as a result of power relations in negotiations between sex workers and police officers who struggle for the right to the city using those legal tools available to them. This is the struggle for the right to use the city on one’s own terms, a process known as spatial justice.

This analysis is based on a Foucauldian understanding of power relations as productive of subjects (Foucault 1978), following a New Materialist reading of Foucault’s works (Braidotti 1991: 263–266). Foucault proposed to analyse discourse not as a set of texts, but as utterances and silences that give meanings to the things around us, including ourselves as subjects. Judith Butler (1993) argues that for analytical purposes, discourse may be understood not only as text, but also as a set of other forms, including bodies. Current debates in New Materialism situate this idea with respect to material environments, including the city, with these always already related to the production of meanings about sex and sexuality (Colebrook 2017). I take this as a point of departure to analyse the law, the city and sex work using the tool of spatial justice, which is introduced in the next section. I look at this process from an everyday perspective by taking into account mundane manifestations of the city and routine conversations of sex workers.

In the sections that follow the elaboration of the theoretical approach, I will offer analysis of three different datasets. First, I will discuss the law on prostitution in Russia, which is crucial for understanding power relations in the sexual economy. Prostitution is also a part of everyone’s everyday urban life in the form of sexually explicit representations of sex work evident on the city streets. Hence, my second source of data is the urban landscape which I regard as a

manifestation of discourse, not in its textual form but in the material form of the urban landscape of St. Petersburg. Finally, I discuss sex workers' own stories as voiced in 41 peer-to-peer interviews carried out in 2015. In Russia, as in many other contexts, it is sex workers' voices that are often ignored in discussions of sex for sale. The method of collecting qualitative data for this chapter allowed an approximate, intimate and deep understanding of the mechanisms enacted in informal economic activities. I will analyse the peer-to-peer interviews in search of those sources of power that give meanings to the law, city and sex worker's accounts of themselves, taking an everyday perspective on sex for sale seriously, as Skilbrei and Spanger suggest in the introduction to this book.

### **The space of law**

Sex work is a diverse and dynamic social institution that has changed definition as the result of a variety of circumstances as it has become engaged in normalised systems of capitalist consumption and, henceforth, has grown in visibility and diversity (Brock 2000). Or rather, as Agustín argues, sex work has actually been normalised in different ways as a part of 'conventional social life', while polarised reactions to it (criminalisation or ignorance/tolerance) operate to perpetuate its marginal position and 'uncontrolled development in the underground economy' (2005: 618). Hence, a variety of definitions of sex work still remain in currency, encompassing different legal and policy responses to the regulation of prostitution (Bruckert and Hannem 2013). One example of a policy response is the 'Nordic model', commonly accepted as best practice but still highly controversial, which unilaterally criminalises the purchase of sex (Skilbrei and Holmström 2011). Such approaches are often criticised for ignoring sex workers' definitions of sex work, enacting the neo-abolitionist position that those engaged in it lack agency (Doezema 1998; Halley *et al.* 2006: 412).

In this analysis of sex work in Russia I offer a discussion of spatial justice in the city of St. Petersburg – a form of sexual urban landscape crafted by people's use of the city. Spatial justice is usually engaged in analysis of urban politics as people redesign cities through activism to claim a different distribution of economic wealth, as reflected in how neighbourhoods' infrastructures appear on the surface of cities (Soja 2010). Some neighbourhoods become poorer than others, and this inequality results from particular social and material processes that either sustain current conditions or challenge injustice due to the feeling of deprivation (Harvey 2012). In this regard, my aim is to analyse the city of St. Petersburg with respect to the ways in which the sexual economy is organised and reflected in the city landscape, what kind of spatial justice is established there and what social processes this conveys. Yet, I am not discussing the political activities of sex workers in relation to their views of the use of the city. Rather I look at a different process, which is the redistribution of power in the use of and resistance to the law. The law on sex work is central to how spatial justice or injustice is being constituted because it is one of the major tools of redistribution of power in an environment where political processes are constrained.

1 While considering the law on prostitution in Russia, I look at power relations 2 permitted by and crystallised in legal norms, trying to understand how law and 3 policies benefit the state rather than sex workers (Berg 2015: 150). State law lays 4 out the paths by which power may be channelled in a way that benefits particular 5 forces, especially those responsible for enforcement of law, such as the police. 6 No matter what legislators had in mind while drafting a law, its further effects – 7 or intended and unintended consequences – may depart from these initial ideas 8 (Bruckert and Hannem 2013). This is why critical examination of the law 9 addresses the current configuration of power relations maintained by it, rather

10 than checking compliance of the regulated phenomena with formal rules. It is 11 because legal texts are usually based on existing power relations and do not seek 12 to challenge the deeper roots of injustice. For example, when drafting a law to 13 ‘help’ sex workers, legislators rarely remove stigmatisation of prostitution, 14 which makes sex work a risky enterprise, and therefore simply reproduces the 15 conditions they have sought to pre-empt (Carline and Scoular 2015: 110).

16 Critical examination of law is especially important in regard to its everyday 17 form in law enforcement practices (see, on stigma, in this regard Kotiswaran 18 2011: 14; Fassi 2014). The law provides powerful tools to police officers, and 19 they may use these tools to achieve various goals, perhaps beyond those pre- 20 sumed by the legislators. For example, in Russia, law enforcement acts to repro- 21 duce the existing configuration of power relations: it is ‘a highly adaptable 22 structure in which intertwined networks of legality and illegality work in concert 23 in officially sanctioned and non-sanctioned ways; a relationship that sustains and 24 supports the existing system of power’ (Stephenson 2017: 412). I shall analyse 25 peer-to-peer interviews with sex workers to learn how law enforcement uses the 26 existing law on prostitution in Russia for its own benefit in the set of power rela- 27 tions reproduced through legal arrangements and reflected in the city landscape. 28 One of the material forms in which power relations maintained by law are 29 manifested is in the urban landscape. Legal regulations and law enforcement 30 arrange our cities (Valverde 2012), and cities are understood as intertwined with 31 current definitions of sex and sexuality (Colebrook 2017). Thus, a number of 32 critical geography research studies have concluded that urban landscapes are 33 organised in a way that prioritises respectable consumption, such that sex work 34 is marginalised and relegated to particular darker parts of the city (Duncan 1996; 35 Bell and Binnie 2006; Collins 2013). Respectable citizens and families embody 36 the ‘desired’ order, presented as opposite to the presumed disorder of sex 37 workers who are targeted by police violence and spatial regulations (Hubbard 38 1999: 180; Fassi 2014). Hence, there are power relations which work to redis- 39 tribute respectability and stigmatisation to various groups, and by doing so locate 40 these groups in different parts of the city (see, Testai in this book). This configu- 41 ration of power is then reflected in the urban landscape through zoning or a social 42 division of neighbourhoods into those where different forms of sexual exposure 43 may seem appropriate or are banned.

44 In this vein, Hubbard argues that ‘prostitution [...], like graffiti or litter, [...] 45 may signify to people that an area is vulnerable to crime, setting in motion a

dynamic of neighbourhood decline' (Hubbard 1998: 282). Hence, cities are divided into different zones where sex work is either permissible (i.e. 'red-light' districts) or where it is excluded, or at least depends upon 'everyday negotiations between police and prostitutes' to determine the extent of permissible conduct (Hubbard 1998: 272). Building on Hubbard's (1999: 1) findings I aim to investigate how 'forms of human sexuality and sexual practice are shaped by the structuring of space', or rather how sexuality and the city are engaged in a complex set of interactions that reshape both. Looking at the situation in Russia, I want to show that urban zoning – reflecting a particular configuration of power relations – may not necessarily occur, and sex work may not necessarily mark a particular neighbourhood as decadent. In Russia, the urban landscape represents a more unified space which tells a story of a particular configuration of power relations, characterised by a single force which makes this space materialise as it does.

The situation described above is related to what Hubbard (2015) adds to the notion of 'spatial justice', pointing to the idea that urban space is available to a variety of communities who can use it in their own way. This argument presupposes an analysis of the redistribution of power in a concrete configuration of relations productive for urban landscape. I examine the city as a material space which is both constituted by and constituent of power relations (Maynard 1999; Knopp 2009). Through the idea of spatial justice as regulation of the city, access to the city neighbourhoods by various communities, and sexual exposure in the city, I track the relationships between power and material spaces, sex work and the law. This allows me to analyse regulation of sex work in Russia as produced through a complex of power relations manifested in the urban landscape, legal norms and sex workers' accounts.

## Legal arrangements

In order to proceed with this analysis of the law on sex work and the city, it is crucial to reflect upon how legal norms are designed in Russia. Sex work in Russia is regulated by both administrative and criminal law statutes. Administrative law targets those who 'benefit from prostitution' either by actually practicing it (Art. 6.11 of the Administrative Code) or by deriving income from someone else's prostitution by facilitating meetings between sex worker and client (Art. 6.12). Once detained for one of these actions by the police a person is subjected to a monetary fine under Art. 6.11, of 1,500–2,000 RUR (€25–30), and either a fine of 2,000–5,000 RUR (€30–80) or 10–15 days of administrative arrest under Art. 6.12. These punishments are quite mild. Fines under Art. 6.11 constitute a little less than the average price for an hour of a sex worker's time in St. Petersburg, according to our interviewees' estimation.

Statistics on enforcement of these articles is unclear. The Ministry of Internal Affairs cites data that speaks of 10,500 yearly incidents.<sup>1</sup> Referencing the same data, scholars showed that there were more than one million people engaged in sex work in 2013, with 10,500 of them having received administrative fines (Shuvalova 2014: 165). Information from an independent database on court

decisions suggests that in Russia less than half this number of fines are registered by the court system every year (Table 12.1). Moreover, very few cases are mentioned in St. Petersburg (three cases under Administrative law, all of them under Art. 6.11). There is a significant difference between enforcement of Art. 6.11 and 6.12, with the former applied more frequently than the latter.<sup>2</sup>

As for criminal law articles, they are designed in a very complicated manner. Art. 240 of the Criminal Code of Russia prohibits ‘recruitment in prostitution’ and consists of three paragraphs, one of which is divided in another three subparagraphs. It is intended to punish those who force other people to work in prostitution or make them continue against their will. Punishment ranges from a €3,300 fine to deprivation of liberty for a period of up to three years (Art. 240). In fact, the article sets out four different kinds of punishments:

1. monetary fine (itself subdivided into a number of means of payment and calculations);
2. limitation of liberty (prohibition to leave a certain town, for example);
3. forced labour (work defined by penitentiary officers for which a certain share of salary will be withdrawn by the state);
4. deprivation of liberty (imprisonment).

As for article 241, it is designed in the same complicated manner and deals with ‘organisation of prostitution’ by other persons (‘maintenance of a disorderly house for prostitution or repeating provision of premises for prostitution’). Doing this subjects a person to fines of 500,000 RUR (€8,300) or terms of up to five years of forced labour or deprivation of liberty. Paragraphs two and three of the article describe aggravating circumstances and set the maximum term of deprivation of liberty at 10 years. There is another article in the Criminal Code related to sex work (Art. 240.1) which prohibits purchase of sexual services from persons aged 16–18 by those aged over 18 (minors under 16 are protected though criminalisation of ‘paedophilia’).

The division between administrative and criminal law allows for maintenance <sup>32</sup> of a particular imbalance in power relations. At least theoretically, police officers <sup>33</sup> may choose to apply either administrative or criminal law depending on how <sup>34</sup> they define the suspect, because they arrive first at the scene of a crime and – if

*Table 12.1* Number of court decisions by articles (AC, Administrative Code, and CC, Criminal Code)

<i>Table 12.1</i> Number of court decisions by articles (AC, Administrative Code, and CC, Criminal Code)						
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Article</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>
Doing	6.11 AC	4,964	4,764	3,727	4,246	5,361
Facilitating	6.12 AC	269	163	323	197	276
Recruitment	240 CC	103	116	105	108	93
Organisation	241 CC	382	543	613	745	840

Source: Database of court decisions Rospravosudie.

they have enough power – may influence the way in which this scene of a crime is processed further in the legal system. Our interviewees suggested the police do have this power. Besides, there is something in the very design of the law that helps to maintain police power: administrative regulations are easier to enforce as procedure is based primarily on the reports of on-the-ground patrol officers. Criminal law procedure is much more complicated as it entails investigation, involvement of many different departments and law enforcement agencies, and exchange with and dependence on other actors involved in criminal procedures (witnesses, prosecutors, investigators, judges etc.). Meanwhile, according to our interviewees, in practice, what type of offence an officer processes is to a large extent down to his own discretion: in sex work, there might be persons who potentially fall under multiple administrative and criminal law charges as those who do, facilitate, recruit people and organise ‘prostitution’ – but it is an officer’s own decision to legally define their actions at the specific moment, which situation will be discussed in the interviews below.

Criminal law articles are enforced less often than Administrative Code statutes. As Table 12.1 shows, brothel keeping is a more frequent charge than recruitment. Similar data is cited from police reports in legal journals (Shuvalova 2014: 165). As analysis of cases shows, sex workers and managers of brothels are subjected solely to administrative law if convicted at all, even if they commit actions banned by the Criminal Code (Alikhadzhieva 2009: 124). Besides, such a long list of possible punishments allows for more space for negotiation of the final sentence even when charges are presented, and this negotiation may take place at the stage of investigation, not in court, again reinforcing the power of the police. Of the few criminal cases that reach court 30 per cent are not heard in courtrooms at all: if the accused pleads guilty and accepts the punishment, then the court is not obliged to hear the case and confirms the punishment via an automatic sentence (Alikhadzhieva 2009: 126). Given a wide range of punishments this affords more privilege to informal relations that may exist between sex work managers and the police.

Faith in criminal law (Kotiswaran 2011: 14) ensures solidarity between Russian police scholars and some feminists, all arguing for further criminalisation of clients (Shuvalova 2014: 166; Rakhmaninova 2015: 159). There are a few exceptions from this general trend where the criminalisation agenda is challenged from an everyday practices perspective (Krupets and Nartova 2010). Yet, this everyday perspective on law enforcement shows that its implementation may significantly depart from the text of law (Valverde 2012), leaving advocates of criminalisation surprised. In the next section I will show how prostitution law works to organise the city. I argue that police officers remain the major force in defining sex work which creates a situation that is well reflected in the city landscape.

### **Evidence of sex work on pavements**

Despite issues that may require authorities’ attention as sex workers and civil rights activists seek protection from violence, better labour conditions and to

diminish the effects of stigmatisation, Russian law regards sex work solely as an offence, either administrative or criminal. Thus, within this general legal policy, 'prostitution' remains a kind of criminal activity or demeanour into which people 'fall' involuntarily or due to their 'inherent' inclination to vice. For example, this logic has driven Russian authorities and judges to decide to ban the establishment of a sex workers' trade union. The main argument was that as there could not be such a profession as 'sex worker', no sex workers' trade union could be created (Reshenie 2014).

Yet, the stigma attached to sex workers by the law is hardly evident in the everyday life of cities. When you look at the level of exposure of sexual commerce in Russian cities, it is difficult to relate sex work to criminal or stigmatised activities. Rather, sex work seems normalised and even promoted, just like sexually explicit content in public generally. Since the fall of the USSR, Russian cities have become heavily sexualised spaces (Essig 1999: 89). A group of researchers who tried to approach sex work from a public health perspective at the end of 1990s eventually decided to use methods of critical geography to map Moscow's sites of sexual commerce as it was so visible and noticeably a part of the urban landscape. They concluded that sex work is everywhere in Moscow (Aral *et al.* 2003: 40). Currently in St. Petersburg the situation is even more extreme as streets, avenues, squares and small lanes are all painted with announcements of sex offers (Figure 12.1).

The road graffiti is written in different languages, but also delivers its messages with pictures offering sexual services with the use of Play Boy bunnies and love hearts. These pavement announcements are complemented by paper ads glued on street lighting and building walls (Figure 12.2). Finally, there are people on the streets (usually men in their forties wearing black leather jackets) who disseminate flyers to passers-by with information about the nearest brothel. The flyers advertise discounts and that you can pay with Visa or Master Card for the services provided.

This explicit exposure of sex work on the urban landscape makes 'prostitution' a normalised everyday activity, available equally – at least in this form of informational consumption – to anyone despite legal prohibitions. Though, I argue that the law has something to do with it. Legal arrangements described in the previous section suggest that the police may play a significant role in how sex work is organised, including the ways in which the urban landscape is being employed by sex workers. The authority of the law opens possibilities for interventions by the police, producing that sort of spatial justice which manifests itself in the painted streets of St. Petersburg: it is rather spatial injustice so long as the city is produced as a uniform space. This idea is developed further below. At the beginning of the post-Soviet period, in St. Petersburg's downtown and industrial suburbs, there were zones specifically inhabited by the sex industry. These sex zones included darker parts of the city's central streets or its industrial neighbourhoods (from 'Staro-Nevsky Avenue' to railway stations to Gay Village [Vesely Poselok], an industrial zone of the metropolitan area).<sup>3</sup> As the configuration of power relations was gradually transforming, these venues

---



also transformed. Fewer forces now manage to contribute to negotiations of sex work as the state institutions consolidated power in official hands and, consequently, all other forces were marginalised: the ‘respectable citizens’, but also criminal groups which, perhaps, at least partially joined the state (Stephenson 2015). Hence, nowadays the whole city space is visibly marked by offers of sex services, and this represents quite a uniform distribution of spatial justice.

The map of the metro surveyed by Ekaterina Ivanova<sup>4</sup> who captured pictures of pavement advertisements of sex work demonstrates that it has spread to every



Figure 12.1 Public advertisement of sex work in St. Petersburg. Source: photo by Ekaterina Ivanova.



*Figure 12.2* Street light advert of sexual service in St. Petersburg. Source: photo by Ekaterina Ivanova.



possible corner of the city, including what are considered its most respectable zones. She concludes that telephone numbers on the advertisements are unique for each zone, which reveals that actual sex service provision is situated close to the location of the advertisement. Moreover, central zones of St. Petersburg are also full of visible soliciting on the streets: there are men and sometimes casually dressed women who distribute flyers with ‘entertaining girls’ photos. They usually invite people to come into bars, massage parlours, SPAs or hostels close by in order to experience this entertainment. The city of St. Petersburg is clearly a sex zone in its entirety. The amount and variety of sexual services reveals a growing and successful industry that is normalised and recognised rather than a shadow informal economy. The following section discusses how this situation is possible given the existing administrative and criminal legislation on sex work.

### **Sex workers speak for themselves**

#### ***Methodological considerations***

In summer and autumn 2015, the Union of Artists and Sex Workers – ‘Teresa’ and the Centre for Independent Social Research conducted a study of St. Petersburg’s

sex industry together. We aimed to engage sex workers as much as possible in this study and elaborated a participatory research design for this purpose. By combining action research, feminist methodology and qualitative methods, we recruited a core group of seven sex workers who designed their own interview guide, then went to the 'field' and collected interviews with their colleagues, and finally discussed findings and impressions during seminars. This helped us to access the hidden corners of our society where those presumably unwanted lead their everyday life, but it also contributed to the emergence of sociological reflections by those sex workers who were involved in our study.

What was generated during this research was not a number of narrative inter-views, but rather conversations, an exchange of mundane knowledge between two peers. This makes these stories unique and detailed in terms of scrutinising a great variety of topics related to sex work in St. Petersburg, including the involvement of the police in the power relations that define it. Yet, this also makes the interviews purposely biased by the perspective of the sex workers whose position is so necessary to hear if our aim is to establish justice.

The interviewees have various backgrounds in sex work. The core group of seven sex workers conducted 41 interviews with their colleagues. Some of them worked on their own, others were employees of a larger enterprise or part of a small group of friends who decided to open their own business. There were women, men and transgender persons – all identified with a variety of sexual identities, including lesbian and gay. Some of our interviewees have come to St. Petersburg from another city or town in Russia, very few have also been foreign nationals. Many of them were of working class descent, though some could be considered middle class in terms of having educational credentials and career prospects in conventional jobs. Overall, it was a diverse group of people united by their common current occupation in St. Petersburg's sex industry.

The sex workers we interviewed applied a clear definition of sex work. Even though not all of them actually applied that term and some even opposed it, they referred to their activities in a normalised manner and using vocabulary associated with a job market (see, also Krupets and Nartova 2010): time table, shifts, vacations, day off, manager, salary, working hours and so on. Those who explicitly refused such a definition were people that work in the sex industry from time to time and suffer from its stigmatised status. Even those that used a work-related vocabulary preferred to establish boundaries between a 'normal job' and sex work, saying that sex work brings in money, but cannot become their only occupation due to its notorious status, while recognised jobs serve as a sort of cover for relatives, friends and state officials. Yet, there was another obstacle to full acknowledgement of the normalised status of sexual labour: poor working conditions. Even though the sex workers in this study reported they had the right to refuse a client or leave the job, they still mentioned episodes of violence and a feeling of vulnerability which characterises their occupation. Their position is precarious due to the status of sex work in society, and, according to our interviewees, this status is remarkably maintained by existing law enforcement.

***The police force and the law***

The sex workers in this study reflected on two major themes associated with the police: (1) participation of officers in various positions of authority in sex business, and (2) the vulnerable position of sex workers vis-à-vis the power of the officers. Most commonly in the interviews police officers are referred to as ‘protection’ for the business – *krysha*, roofing (see Volkov 2002: 167–168). This largely means that certain police departments get monetary compensation from a brothel located within their jurisdiction in order to ignore its formal illegal status, and to get rid of other criminal groups who otherwise would collect money from this premise. Though this is an illegal activity, the police ‘roofing’ is referred to as mundane, something that happens to everyone: ‘Certainly, there are problems sometimes, quite often actually, but money can solve all the problems. You just pay money to the cops, and you have your protection, just like everyone does’ (Interview 40).

Despite being commonplace, interference from the police in the form of protection is not appreciated, which is reflected in the following extract from a conversation between two sex workers. The two sex workers dream of a future without police, when they can legally submit tax declarations for doing what they do:

B: ...what if in Russia, it were legalised!

A: This would be better, more convenient.

B: This would be a normal occupation. We would just pay taxes, this all would be ... would be ... well, legal.

A: Cops then wouldn’t blackmail us.

B: Yes, yes, yes! I think everything would be much easier. Because now cops come and do this and that... But you know, just give him five hundred roubles and he will kiss your ass.

A: Well, not 500, 5,000.

B: Anyways, it doesn’t matter how much money one has to give him so that he didn’t see what you do here. I think cops are simply greedy. I think so. They make use of the existing law and take the money.

(Interview 10)

This conversation is clearly informed by resistance to the application of power that current law enforcement practices enable. In the context of existing power relations, legal norms seem to permit and even breed injustice as police officers feel free to use the law in pursuing their own interests, including accumulation of financial capital. It is the police that seem to produce sex workers’ concerns and it is the law that positions the police in such a powerful position. The second theme of the interviews reflects the idea that police officers are a major source of sex workers’ vulnerability. For example, several stories concerned a situation where brothel keepers stopped paying money to the police or tried to reduce the amount of monthly payments. In these cases, the police

usually organised a raid in the brothel and arrested everyone who was in there. All the people were usually released after brothel keepers bailed them out, and no legal charges were presented. However, if the police can terrorise a particular brothel for not paying or punish brothel keepers for breaking existing rules, they can also organise a court case against sex workers. As the interviewees argue, the organisers of the business usually do not go to jail, because they are valuable to police officers as they bring in a monthly income, whereas administrators of brothels are charged with criminal offences. This helps to save the business and to threaten its actual organisers. Consider this story as an example:

We understood that they [brothel keepers] have not paid for the roofing and that because of this there is going to be a police raid soon. So administrator can become a criminal and go to jail in this case [...]. So I agreed I will come to the clients just like the rest of the girls, so me, an administrator, will come to the clients as a girl [a sex worker]. Well, I did it before [...]. And it was exactly at this moment when the control purchasing happened, the cops came, they came, the police officers, they all were from the Caucasus, all in this department were the Caucasians: the Dagestani, Osetians – you name. In short, they came, and they couldn't charge me with anything, because I came out as other girls, well. They took us all in their car to the police department [...]. They told us that if we don't want criminal charges, we have to sleep with them. So I just gave him a blow job.

(Interview 12)

Thus, the police are at the centre of sex workers' fears. However, this is so not because sex work is illegal and sex workers could be arrested and convicted, but because anything can happen in a police department. The police officers have power over sex workers. The law reinforces and maintains this hierarchy as the police are representatives of the state, but also they are men, heterosexual, employed and powerful. This power relation reflects broader hierarchies in society and refers to a presumably hegemonic form of power that has no limits. Many sex workers talk about police actions with a very particular Russian word: *bespredel* (limitlessness or lawlessness) (see Volkov 2002: 82). This is an example of a particular technique of power which is mediated by law and establishes a hierarchy where police officers are positioned above other citizens. This leads to a situation where police officers may be the source of violence simply because of the power they have by law. Even though the current situation is described as different from the situation in the 1990s when police officers frequently raped sex workers and forced them to work in police stations cleaning floors and bathrooms (so-called *subbotnik*),<sup>5</sup> they still use their force against the sex workers' will. Yet, the police are also cautious because they have financial relations with either the organisers of the business or the sex workers.

All these stories demonstrate that sex workers point to police officers when talking about violence, cohesion and application of force, rather than clients or brothel keepers. Hence, police are the major source of power, with the meaning

1 of police coupled to violence and lawlessness.<sup>6</sup> Our interview accounts of police 2 involvement in sex work regulation evidence enforcement of norms does not 3 play a straightforward role here. On the contrary, in order to control and benefit 4 from sales of sex, the police use administrative regulations to threaten sex 5 workers with application of norms that do not harm the industry as a whole; 6 whereas criminal law clauses are enforced against those who are not supposed to 7 be subjected to them (administrators) and with a different rationale (to warn 8 business organisers or to engage in a struggle between criminal groups with the 9 mediation of law). This allows to keep sex for sale under the 'roof' of police officers.

## Conclusion

14 If spatial justice means that a city is diverse because various communities use it 15 in their own way and negotiate the right to the city with each other, then at least 16 in one aspect the city of St. Petersburg does not follow this pattern. It is in terms 17 of sex economy that this city is unique as its landscape does not reflect a diver- 18 sity of opinions related to sex work, but a single version of how sex work might 19 be organised (compare with Testai in this book). In this chapter I have shown 20 how laws created to stigmatise and stop prostitution give tools to police officers 21 to maintain their power over other people. The stories of sex workers demon- 22 strated that the police use this power not to meet the demands of the law, but to 23 benefit from managing sex for sale. This explains why in terms of sexual 24 economy the city of St. Petersburg is so unitary in its form, because only one 25 power – the power of the police – manages the city with limitless authority. 26 Hence, spatial justice in this location is justice for a single force, the police, 27 which is clearly a form of injustice. In the process of gentrification in the city of 28 Catania in Sicily, a similar situation takes place, though neo-liberal economic 29 powers solely define the city landscape there rather than the state police (see, 30 Testai in this book).

This configuration of power is characterised by application of two different 32 broad definitions of sex work that circulate in Russia. Sex workers speak of their 33 occupation as normalised labour, where poor working conditions and precarious- 34 ness breed violence. This definition differs from the legal one and is a practice of 35 resistance, though it remains ignored, as the city landscape reveals. Meanwhile, 36 the law expresses an opposing understanding of sex work as a moral vice, devi- 37 ancy and criminal activity. Thus, sex work is heavily regulated through a 38 complex set of statutes whose application simply reinforces inequalities rather 39 than addressing the actual needs of a variety of people engaged in prostitution.

The organisation of the city by a single force exposes an uneven redistribu- 41 tion of power that produces the city in its current form: no conflicting interests 42 are manifested in this urban landscape as no sex workers, no neighbourhood 43 dwellers, not even criminal groups, nor any other participants contribute to the 44 making of the city. This city surface suggests that there is only one force that 45 organises its urban landscape uniformly, at least in relation to the sex for sale.

---

Thus, spatial justice as it relates to sex work in St. Petersburg manifests itself in a form of heavy injustice being crafted by the most powerful force in power relations by the means of law. This arguably means a different approach to the regulation of sex work (not criminal or administrative law) that would redistribute power more evenly needs to be considered.

## Notes

1. 1 MVD: v Rossii okolo milliona prostitutok [MVD: In Russia, There Is Around a Million of Prostitutes], *BFM*, 25 January 2013, available from: [www.bfm.ru/news/206112](http://www.bfm.ru/news/206112) (accessed 1 January 2017).
2. 2 For example, in 2015, cases under 6.12 constituted only 5.5 per cent of cases under 6.11, if the numbers in Table 12.1 are accurate.
3. 3 See, Ulichnaya prostitutsiya Peterburga. Goryachaya desyatka [Petersburg Street Prostitution. Top Ten Places], *Fontanka*, 19 April 2001, available from: [www.fontanka.ru/2001/04/19/64239/](http://www.fontanka.ru/2001/04/19/64239/) (accessed 30 January 2017).
4. 4 (Video) Chteniya TsNSI. Parallelnye miry sotsial'no-pravovykh otnosheniy: reklama na asfalte i seksual'nyy rynek v svete pravovoy neopredelennosti [(Video) CISR readings. Parallel worlds of socio-legal relations: street advertisement and sexual market through legal discretion], *The CISR*, 10 March 2015, available from: <http://cizr.ru/events/video-chteniya-tsnsi-ivanova/> (accessed 30 January 2017).
5. 5 During the Soviet era, 'subbotnik' was a Saturday day once a month when various communities were obliged to work cleaning streets, parks, or working spaces. Officially they were doing it voluntarily as part of the self-conscious and self-organised work of true communists. In police/sex worker relations, this Soviet tradition is sarcastically reworked to bring about a situation where sex workers are obliged to clean police stations and sometimes sexually satisfy police officers for free and involuntarily.
6. 6 I do not want to suggest that there are no committed police officers in Russia. Yet, a number of issues in relation to heavy corruption in the Russian police force were identified by previous studies (Stephenson 2015; Aymaliev 2016). Those who attempt to carry out police work correctly are beyond the scope of this study as they were not mentioned in the analysed interviews.

## References

- Agustín, L. M. (2005). The cultural study of commercial sex. *Sexualities* 8(5), pp. 618–631.
- Alikhadzhieva, I. S. (2009). O sovershenstvovanii praktiki primeneniya sostavov prestupleniy o prostitutsii [On strengthening of practice of corpus delicti enforcement in crimes of prostitution]. *Sovremennoe pravo [Current Law]* 5, pp. 122–126.
- Aral, S., St. Lawrence, J., Tikhonova, L., Safarova, E., Parker, K., Shakarishvili, A. and Ryan, C. (2003). The social organization of commercial sex work in Moscow, Russia. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* 30(1), pp. 39–45.
- Aymaliev, I. (2016). Sravnitel'nyy analiz setevoy politseyskoy korruptsii v Bolgarii i Rossii [A comparative analysis of corrupt police networks in Bulgaria and Russia]. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies* 14(2), pp. 213–228.
- Berg, H. (2015). Trafficking policy, meaning making and state violence. *Social Policy and Society* 14(1), pp. 145–155.
- Bell, D. J. and Binnie, J. (2006). Geographies of sexual citizenship. *Political Geography* 25(8), pp. 869–873.

Braidotti, R. (1991). *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women and Contemporary Philosophy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brock, D. (2000). Victim, nuisance, fallen woman, outlaw, worker? Making the identity, prostitute in Canadian criminal law. In: D. Chunn and D. Lacombe (eds.), *Law as a Gendering Practice* (pp. 79–99). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bruckert, C. and Hannem, S. (2013). Rethinking the prostitution debates: transcending structural stigma in systemic responses to sex work. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society/Revue Canadienne Droit et Société* 28(1), pp. 43–63.

Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge.

Carline, A. and Scoular, J. (2015). Saving fallen women now? Critical perspectives on engagement and support orders and their policy of forced welfarism. *Social Policy and Society* 14, pp. 103–112.

Colebrook, C. M. (2017). Sex and the (Anthropocene) city. *Theory, Culture & Society* 34(2–3), pp. 39–60.

Collins, A. (ed.). (2013). *Cities of Pleasure: Sex and the Urban Socialscape*. New York: Routledge.

Doezema, J. (1998). Forced to choose: beyond the voluntary v. forced prostitution dichotomy. In: K. Kempadoo and J. Doezema (eds.), *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition* (pp. 34–50). New York: Routledge.

Duncan, N. (ed.). (1996). *BodySpace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Routledge.

Essig, L. (1999). *Queer in Russia: A Story of Sex, Self, and the Other*. London: Duke University Press.

Fassi, M. N. (2014). Legal ambiguity as a site of power and resistance: sex work and the police in Córdoba-Argentina. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies* 12(2), pp. 275–286.

Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1*. New York: Pantheon.

Halley, J., Kotsiwaran, P., Shamir, H. and Thomas, C. (2006). From the international to the local in feminist legal responses to rape, prostitution/sex work, and sex trafficking: four studies in contemporary governance feminism. *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 29, pp. 335–423.

Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. New York: Verso.

Hubbard, P. (1998). Community action and the displacement of street prostitution: evidence from British cities. *Geoforum* 29(3), pp. 269–286.

Hubbard, P. (1999). *Sex and the City: Geographies of Prostitution in the Urban West*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Hubbard, P. (2015). Law, sex and the city: regulating sexual entertainment venues in England and Wales. *International Journal of Law in the Built Environment* 7(1), pp. 5–20.

Knopp, L. (2009). From lesbian and gay to queer geographies: pasts, prospects and possibilities. In: K. Browne, J. Lim and G. Brown (eds.), *Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practices and Politics* (pp. 21–28). Farnham: Ashgate.

Kotiswaran, P. (2011). *Dangerous Sex, Invisible Labor: Sex Work and the Law in India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Krupets, Y. and Nartova, N. (2010). Pereopredelenie granits mezhdru trdom, udovol'stvie i nasiliem: seks-rabota kak osoby vid neformal'noy zanyatosti [Revising the borders between labour, pleasure and violence: sex-work as a specific kind of informal employment]. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies* 8(4), pp. 537–550.



Maynard, S. (1999). 'Respect your elders: know your past': history and the queer theorists. *Radical History Review* 75, pp. 56–78.

Rakhmaninova, M. (2015). Fenomen prostitutsii s tochki zreniya sotsialisticheskoy teorii: predposylki i problemy [Phenomenon of prostitution in terms of socialist theory: pre-requisites and problems]. *Istoricheskie, Filosofskie, Politicheskie i Yuridicheskie Nauki, Kul'turologiya i Iskusstvovedenie. Voprosy Teorii i Praktiki* [Historical, Philosophic, Political and Legal Science, Cultural Studies and Arts: Issues of Theory and Practice] 3(53), pp. 158–162.

Reshenie (2014). *Delo N 2–2988/2014 ot 02 iyulya 2014 goda*. Oktyabr'skiy raionniy sud g. Sankt-Peterburga [Decision. Case N 2–2988/2014 from 2 July 2014. Oktyabr'skiy District Court of the city of St. Petersburg].

Shuvalova, D. N. (2014). Kriminalisticheskaya kharakteristika i vyyavlenie prestupleniy, svyazannykh s prostitutsiey [Criminalistic characteristics and detection of crimes related to prostitution]. *Yuridicheskaya Nauka i Pravookhranitel'naya Praktika* [Juris-prudence and Enforcement Practice] 4(30), pp. 164–169.

Skilbrei, M.-L. and Holmström, C. (2011). Is there a nordic prostitution regime? *Crime and Justice* 40(1), pp. 479–517.

Soja, E. (2010). *Globalization and Community: Seeking Spatial Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stephenson, S. (2015). *Gangs of Russia: From the Streets to the Corridors of Power*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Stephenson, S. (2017). It takes two to tango: the state and organized crime in Russia. *Current Sociology* 65(3), pp. 411–426.

Valverde, M. (2012). *Everyday Law on the Street: City Governance in an Age of Diversity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Volkov, V. (2002). *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.